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STATE FOR WHA/AND (MWELLS); WHA/PDA (PSAMSON/BVASQUEZ-LOWE)
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BROWNFIELD'S VISIT TO MEDELLIN, ANTIOQUIA ON
APRIL 15, 2008

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. The Ambassador traveled on April 15 to Medellin to open a three-day workshop on protecting cultural patrimony from looting and illicit trafficking, pay an office call on the Mayor of Medellin, speak with Martin Luther King (MLK) Fellows at a Binational Center, address the status of the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA) during lunch with the business community, hear from victims at the National Commission for Reparations and Reconciliation, and tour the Fiscalía's National Unit for Justice and Peace. This first "official" visit to Medellin, outside of the CTPA/congressional delegation context, was widely covered by the press and highlighted the fullness of the U.S.-Colombia bilateral relationship, focusing on human rights, education, and culture, and trade. End Summary.

U.S.-Colombia Relationship About More Than The CTPA

¶2. (U) During their meeting, the Ambassador thanked Mayor Alonso Salazar for his support with recent congressional delegations, congratulated him on the selection of Medellin as the location for the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly meeting this June, addressed the status of the CTPA, and suggested the need for more small/medium Colombian businesses to voice support for the CTPA. Former Mayor Sergio Fajardo joined Mayor Salazar in noting the strong level of U.S. private investment in Medellin. (Note: Fajardo was attending a Colombian education conference where Mayor Salazar spontaneously led the Ambassador upon greeting and where the Ambassador then offered an impromptu greeting to the crowd, encouraging Colombian students to apply for U.S. scholarships). Approximately 20 members of the press covered the meeting, including an Associated Press (AP) photographer.

¶3. (U) With a focus on education and scholarship programs, Ambassador Brownfield next visited the Medellin Binational Center where he toured classrooms, the library and multimedia room, and spoke with 25 MLK Fellows on themes ranging from studying in the U.S. to outlooks on the U.S. presidential elections. After his meeting with the MLK fellows, which was open to the press, Ambassador Brownfield took questions in a press gaggle, using the opportunity to draw attention to the USG-sponsored cultural patrimony conference opening later that day.

Optimistic The CTPA Will Eventually Succeed

¶4. (U) Luis Alfonso, Executive Director of the Medellin American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), opened a luncheon with members of the AMCHAM, Medellin Chamber of Commerce and the National Business Association of Colombia by asking for the Ambassador's thoughts on the status of the CTPA. Ambassador Brownfield explained that the

recent congressional developments and that he remained optimistic about the eventual outcome. The Ambassador also praised the private sector for their role in transforming the image of Medellin and thanked them for assistance with USG visitors. The director of Medellin daily newspaper El Mundo attended the lunch and published an editorial the following day entitled "A most pleasing visit", stating that they were cheered by the Ambassador's continued optimism that the U.S. Congress would ultimately pass the CPTA.

USG Supports Both Justice And Reparations For Victims

15. (U) The Ambassador visited the regional office of the National Commission for Reparations and Reconciliation (CNRR) which provides information and attention to victims of the Colombian conflict from the department of Antioquia. Greeted by Commissioner Jaime Jaramillo and the director of the center, Eduardo Vega, the Ambassador toured the facility and received a briefing on the center's work and the reparations and reconciliation process in the department. Since it opened in 2007, the CNRR has received over 8,000 victims. Following the briefing, the Ambassador met with a group of 27 members of the victim's organization, Madres de la Candelaria, and a smaller delegation representing 23 families, victims of paramilitary and guerilla activities in the area of Uraba. The spokespersons of these groups presented testimonies of the issues affecting victims in Antioquia. The Ambassador recognized the great efforts of the CNRR and the victims' groups, emphasizing the importance of reparations to the victims who suffer the most from the country's conflict, and reiterating the commitment of the USG to continue supporting the work of the CNRR as lead agency for the attention to victims.

16. (U) The Ambassador visited Medellin's Office of Fiscalia's

National Unit for Justice and Peace (JP), where he met with the Unit Coordinator and lead prosecutor. The National Unit is tasked with investigating demobilized paramilitary and guerilla members; interviewing, receiving, and recording complaints from victims; and preparing and administering the required confessions. The Unit is also responsible for identifying, locating and seizing assets and other ill-gotten gains (which are then used to compensate victims). During the visit, the prosecutors provided the Ambassador a comprehensive presentation about JP legal and administrative process and its implementation. They led him on a tour of the facilities, including hearing and victims' rooms, financial support provided by the USG, and introduced him to several prosecutors and investigators. The day after the visit, El Colombiano, Colombia's second largest daily, featured the Ambassador visiting the Fiscalia's headquarters in a front page, above-the-fold picture. This served to draw attention to the enormous investments the USG has made into the construction of the facility as well as the training of Colombian prosecutors and defenders.

17. (U) Ambassador Brownfield offered welcoming remarks at the opening ceremony of a workshop sponsored by the U.S. and Colombian governments and the OAS for "Protecting Cultural Patrimony against Looting and Illicit Trafficking." Ambassador Brownfield greeted the specialists who had traveled from the U.S., Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru to participate in this three-day workshop and stressed the importance of international cooperation in the protection of cultural patrimony.

Huge Success With Colombian Media

18. (U) Ambassador Brownfield generated an enormous amount of local broadcast and print media interest, including an editorial calling him "a great friend" to Colombia. One journalist commented that the Medellin press corps viewed his visit as the "first time a U.S. Ambassador to Colombia had shown so much interest in Colombia's judicial process." Ambassador Brownfield did an exclusive interview with Teleantioquia, Colombia's largest regional channel reaching all of the Department of Antioquia and the rest of the country via cable. Questions focused on the prospects for the CPTA, former paramilitary leader alias Macaco's pending extradition, and whether the Ambassador enjoyed eating the local food.

BROWNFIELD